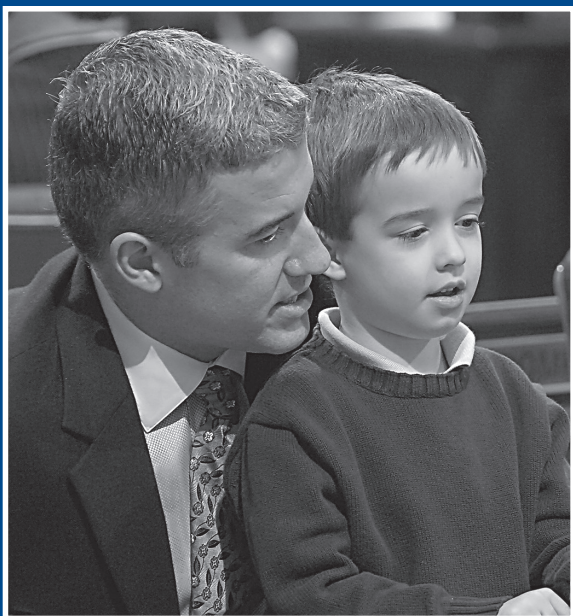


State Representative • 22nd District Brendan Williams



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Dear Neighbor,

In their book, *The Liberal Hour: Washington and the Politics of Change* in the 1960s, authors G. Galvin Mackenzie and Robert Weisbrot note, "Most of the time, inertia is the most powerful force in government. Those who seek change have to succeed at dozens of potential veto points. Those who seek to prevent change usually have to succeed at only one."

The past two legislative sessions have not disproved that analysis.

To the cruelty of last year's no-new-taxes, all-cuts budget was added \$660 million in new cuts this session – and only a very modest tax package that, regrettably, is less than fully progressive.

Among progressive tax policies defeated were the Clean Water Act of 2010 to hold Big Oil accountable for stormwater pollution, as well as an effort to close a tax loophole for Wall Street banks whose excesses were responsible for our economic crisis. I would much rather have taxed those banks than, say, beer and pop.

While you'll hear a lot of fuss over the tax increase that did occur, it primarily closed tax loopholes – the largest being one for out-of-state corporations. As an attorney, I'll pay the largest general tax increase – a temporary increase in business and occupation taxes for professional services.

In total, the tax package raises only slightly more than the taxes Oregon passed last year on a budget half Washington's size – and Oregon voters upheld those taxes.

The alternative, after all, is even more slash-and-burn cuts to education and health care.

The most progressive policy measure to pass requires a public vote: Rep. Hans Dunshee's Engrossed House Bill 2561 (Funding construction of energy cost saving improvements to public facilities), for which I was the first co-sponsor, will give voters the choice on a referendum to create jobs through \$505 million in state bonds. If the referendum passes, an estimated \$126 million will be saved each year in public schools through reduced energy and operational

costs – equivalent to the energy usage of 90,000 homes.

Otherwise, very little progressive occurred. Once again, a Homeowners' Bill of Rights failed – leaving Washington less progressive than even Louisiana in holding homebuilders accountable for construction defects. Amazingly, the building lobby was even able to defeat an effort to sanction criminal, unregistered builders.

Meanwhile, in Seattle, a 9-year-old 25-story apartment complex will be torn down due to construction defects. Regrettably, complete subservience to the building lobby has been the norm, as I can attest from having been admonished in the House Speaker's Office for standing up to them.

As was true last year, the supplemental operating budget slams the 22nd Legislative District hard – and I voted NO, again, for that reason. An Olympian headline read: "House approves budget that cuts 1,534 state jobs." To which I would add, "and furloughs many of the rest!" This was on top of the three thousand layoffs, pay freezes, and health care robbery in the previous budget.

I had voted NO on furloughing state employees (a nonsensical, reactive policy), and sought to make the pay cuts they represent apply to legislators. That effort was rejected, as too many legislators complained that, even with tax-subsidized private dining rooms, they could not live on less than \$249.49 a day during session (even after I gave the example of a veterans' home laundress who makes \$86.64 a day cleaning veterans' soiled laundry and now faces losing 10 of those paydays).

On April 12, my last night legislating, I worked to make the budget better.

Absent a committee process, the budget begins closure of Maple Lane School – a local juvenile rehabilitation facility that employs 260. Many workers reside here in our district. My amendment to save it failed very narrowly (42-51). That defeats the aim of rehabilitating juvenile offenders by keeping them close to their family support network.

A better result came with an amendment I worked on to save jobs – and the vital state services provided – in the Health & Recovery Services Administration of the Department of Social & Health Services (DSHS). Like a thunderbolt, 140 workers in downtown Olympia were hit with news they were losing their jobs. Preposterously, this decision by DSHS – borne out of mismanagement – would have lost the state more federal dollars than state dollars saved. To reverse this I worked with my friend Rep. Pat Sullivan, a budget vice chair, and House Health Care & Wellness Committee Chair Eileen Cody.

It's tragic to see us defining victory by the slight mitigation of severe defeat. We couldn't muster the votes to take on Big Oil or Wall Street banks, so we punished kids, college students, seniors, and state employees instead. This budget will still be devastating to early learners like my 7-year-old, who face budget cuts in K-12 education and a future defined by an increasingly inaccessible, unaffordable higher education system.

In a sign of the times, one House colleague, who joined me in voting no on the budget, noted, "Some legislators will not be satisfied until each remaining state employee is hung up in the House Chamber so they can take whacks at them like human piñatas."

I am proud that, by sharing our willingness to withhold votes at critical junctures, my fellow progressives in a Blue-Green Alliance managed to achieve as much positive change as we did – despite fighting one rearguard action after another.



I joined thousands at a rally who were willing to raise new revenue this session in order to save education, health care, and social service funding from budget cuts.



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We definitely moved the discussion in a better direction on matters such as revenue and state employee health care benefits. I was proud to work with organized labor in this effort. I wish it had not been necessary to stand so many times demanding electronic roll calls (and transparency) on efforts to betray working families.

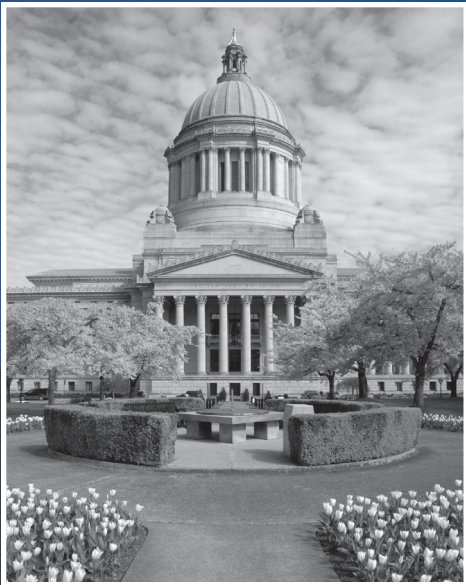
Based on my observation over six years, the dominant legislative ideology can be described as neither liberal nor conservative, but simply, "Happy to be here, and awaiting instruction." You can do better. If you demand more, this newsletter is worth its cost.

In his final speech, Senator Robert F. Kennedy stated, "Fear not the path of truth for the lack of people walking on it." I certainly wish I could have done more. I hope my successor can. It's been a great honor serving you.

Best,

Brendan

Final Bills Pass



It seems like so long ago, given the length of the special session, but I did get some bills through in my last session. I had the companion House bills to three Senate bills that passed into law – one eased individual tax burdens from annexing Lacey into the Lacey Fire District; another required insurers to pay the sales tax on durable medical equipment – a top priority for those with disabilities; and still another limited government intrusions on rental property.

I also amended a Senate bill on unfair utility liens and turned it into a very significant victory for both landlords and, especially, tenants, by working with landlord advocates, tenant advocates and utilities.

Finally, I had three prime-sponsored bills that passed. House Bill 1149 (Protecting consumers from breaches of security) was an effort I worked on for three years, finally overcoming corporate lobbying this year, to sanction negligent businesses failing to protect the privacy of their customers' financial data.

Like many constituents, I was burned last year by the massive Heartland data breach – such negligence should not be tolerated. Their data

breach in January 2009 was estimated to have compromised over 100 million credit card accounts nationwide

House Bill 1956 (Authorizing religious organizations to host temporary encampments for homeless persons on property owned or controlled by a religious organization) came to transcend a now-repealed discriminatory Lacey ordinance and be featured on KING-5, and in other media nationwide, as a model to limit the ability of local governments to discriminate against those serving the homeless. Big Brother shouldn't dictate to churches, synagogues and temples how they honor their religious principles.

House Bill 2596 (Defining child advocacy centers for the multidisciplinary investigation of child abuse and implementation of county protocols), with a cumbersome title, was a top priority for victims' advocates. When sexually abused children come into a child advocacy center (one such facility, the Monarch Children's Justice & Advocacy Center, is in Lacey) they can, among other things, receive a medical examination on site rather than having to go to another location.

A bill of mine that didn't pass (despite 50 co-sponsors!) - a failure I truly regret - was providing insurance parity for those with Autism. As I was quoted saying in a special KIRO 710 report, "People forget the enormous veto power that the insurance industry has as sort of a fourth branch of government. The problem is that the parents of children with Autism don't have a political action committee to either threaten, or let's say encourage, legislators and the insurance industry does." I'll keep fighting for this civil rights measure as a private citizen. And we shall overcome.

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